Oklahoma Chess Monthly

FEBRUARY 2021

Chess News and Chess History for Oklahoma

The BOOK REVIEW ISSUE

In This Issue:

- Bobby Fischer and His World
- 60 Memorable Games - Carlsen
- JOHN TAYLOR
- Plus News Bites, Game of the Month, Puzzles, Top 25 List, Tournament Reports, and more.

BOOK REVIEW:

Bobby Fischer and His World

A New Authoritative Book on Bobby Fischer With New Games, Stories, and Photos. Written by IM John Donaldson

Reviewed by Lou Hays

Bobby Fischer and His World, by International Master John Donaldson (published November 2020, Siles Press, Softcover, 644 pg.)

> *(Full disclosure: John Donaldson is a longtime friend of mine. One chapter of the book, "Comeback" is the story of my own experiences with Bobby Fischer in 1992, first published in OCM June 2017. I have no financial interest in the promotion or sale of this book. -LH)*

IM John Donaldson, the world's leading historian on Bobby Fischer spent ten years compiling and writing this remarkable and

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Published the 1st of each month.

Send story submissions and tournament reports, etc., by the 15th of the previous month to mailto:tom.braunlich@cox.net

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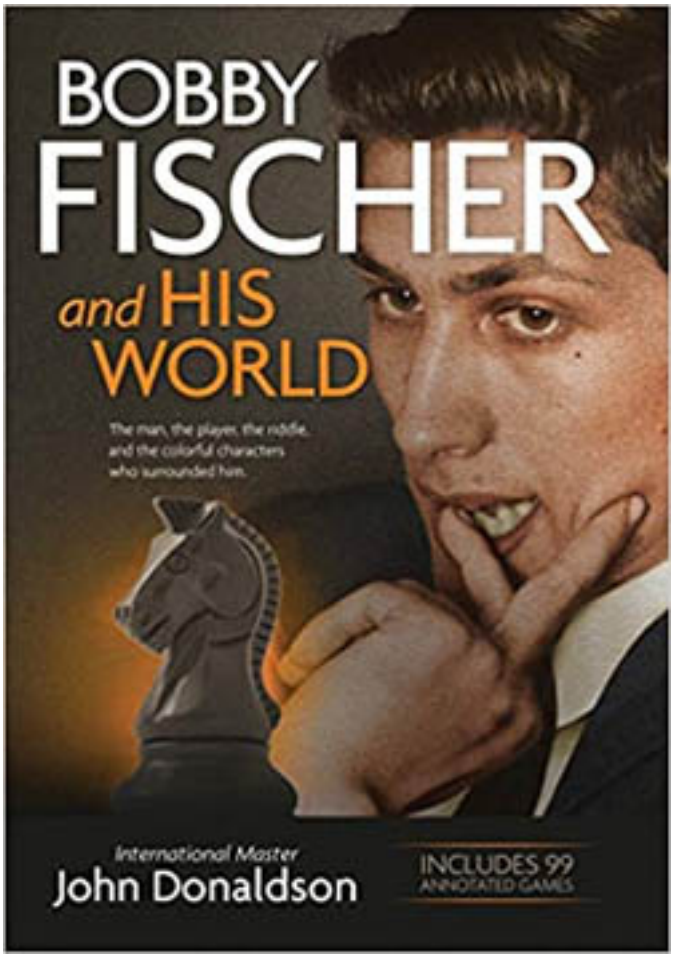


detailed book chronicling Bobby Fischer's life and adventures. The spellbinding story is filled with titillating anecdotes, previously unknown facts, rare photographs and many new games. Donaldson includes 99 annotated games, including a ten-game practice match Fischer played against GM Svetozar Gligoric before the 1992 Fischer-Spassky match (which Bobby won 7½ - 2½).

Of particular interest to me was a story of the 1969 U.S. Junior championship in New York City (an invitational tournament). It's an example of the kind of story you don't often hear about Bobby. In the middle of one of the rounds, Bobby, (then 26 years old and a contender for the world title) walked into the playing hall carrying some 'materials' under his arm. With Bobby standing by, the tournament games all came to a quick finish as the awestruck youths wanted to meet Bobby. The materials he was carrying turned out to be recent Russian chess magazines.

> *"The book has something for everybody, young and old. It reminds me of the old Fireside Book of Chess on steroids. I could not put it down."*

Fischer then invited the participants to analyze some games with him. One of those youthful players was my friend and chess teacher, FIDE master John Jacobs of Dallas. John recounted this adventure to me years later and he was still excited to say he had met Bobby Fischer in the flesh.

Bobby Fischer in New York (Beth Cassidy)

Another noteworthy morsel was the chapter on Bobby's published rating climb between the summer of 1956 (when Bobby was 13 years old) and January of 1958 – from 1726 to 2626 – an incredible 900-point increase in just 18 months. *(When you hear of such rating gains among juniors nowadays it is usually from an artificially low scholastic rating starting point around 500, not starting from upper Class B! – TB)*

Entertaining tales of Bobby's bizarre experiences are sprinkled throughout. His biting another player's arm on a car ride to a tournament, insulting GM Benko over the use of a tournament second that caused Benko to slug him, the story of Fischer playing a high stakes blitz match all night then falling asleep at the board the next day against GM Bisguier. (Bisguier graciously woke him and Bobby

proceeded to beat him with only minutes left on his clock).

Donaldson publishes various Fischer letters, revealing the depths of his mistrust and disdain of chess "authorities" (FIDE, USCF, tournament directors, the Russians).

The book has something for everybody, young and old. It reminds me of the old *Fireside Book of Chess* on steroids. I could not put it down. My friend, USCF Life Master Mike Richards of Hurst, Texas received an early copy. I asked his opinion:

"For years I have sought out and enjoyed sharing anecdotes and tidbits about Fischer, always hoping the sources were valid. This book is a godsend! New games and original information are woven together with numerous illustrations. Bobby was an American icon as well as a driving force in clearing up the corruption in world chess. I have owned hundreds of chess books and this one is a keeper. A single volume captures the chess legacy of Bobby Fischer."

Bobby Fischer died in 2008, but his story remains of great historical interest. He was among the most famous and curious personalities of the twentieth century. Despite a tragic descent into insanity that forever tarnished his legacy, Fischer's monumental accomplishments at the chessboard will always be admired and remembered.

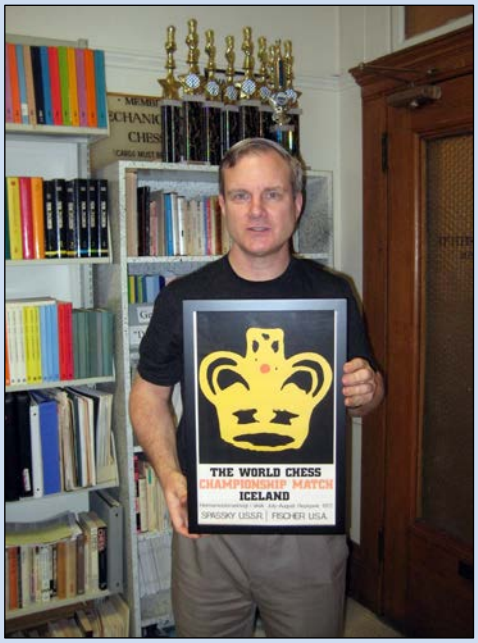
Bobby Fischer and His World is massive, including nine parts, fifty-seven chapters and 644 pages. The book is well organized; with large, clear diagrams well separated from the bolded game text moves, making it easy to navigate.

I have been buying, reading, and loving chess books for nearly sixty-five years. None has given me as much enjoyment as this one. At $29.95 it is a steal.

Five Stars! *****

*(Editor's Note: Lou Hays' article **Why Bobby Came Back**, first published here in the OCM in June 2017, is quoted in full by Donaldson, as are many other sources he uses to dig up great new stories on Fischer, most of which I haven't heard of before. Donaldson also tracks down what happened to much of Bobby Fischer's "Lost Treasures" – his personal collection of chess memorabilia that was accidentally sold at auction in January 1999. It was a sad loss, and very painful for Bobby. Donaldson's detective work is grimly fascinating. John also sprinkles the book with many rare photos of Fischer and the people in his life, many taken by the late Beth Cassidy who lived in Tulsa.)*

IM John Donaldson



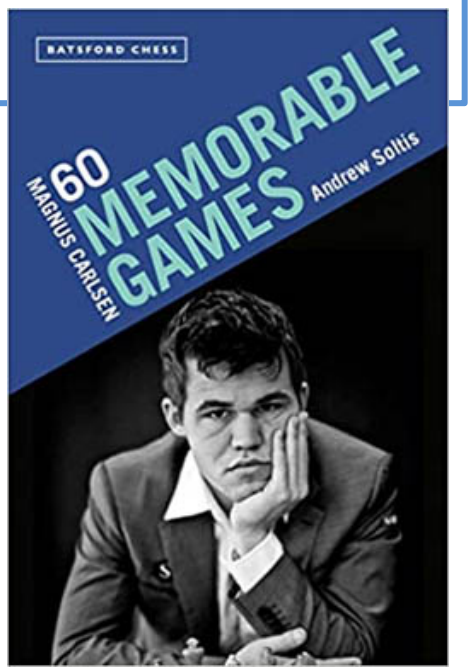
"Honorary Okie" IM John Donaldson is a chess scholar and historian who writes chess book reviews for us every month in OCM and has often played in Oklahoma, as long time friend of the Berry brothers. His last appearance here was in 2019 when he played in the Frank K Berry Memorial and gave a lecture in Tulsa.

He is best known as the long-time coach of the USA Olympiad Chess Team in international competitions, and long-time director of the oldest chess club in the USA (the San Francisco 'Mechanics Institute Chess Club').

60 MEMORABLE GAMES — Carlsen!

BOOK REVIEW

by Tom Braunlich



Magnus Carlsen: 60 Memorable Games, by GM Andrew Soltis (published November 2020, Batsford Chess, Paperback, 384 pg.)

For Fischer-era players, Bobby's "My 60 Memorable Games" is considered a favorite chess book, not only due to the great games and Fischer's own annotations, but also for the personalized format with each game given a title and introduction by Larry Evans which set the dramatic stage for the encounter and framed the games in a style that made them come alive.

Now GM Soltis has taken that same format and applied it to the best games of Magnus Carlsen — and it works beautifully.

The 60 great games were selected to illustrate Carlsen's style, ranging from a famous early brilliancy of his as a kid, from 2003, right up to one from January 2020. Each game is given a title and lucid introduction, and Soltis annotates them in an entertaining style: mostly verbal, concentrating on the positional factors more than tactical variations.

The book includes an excellent introduction "What Made Magnus" in which he analyzes the main features of Carlsen's success: *Playability* (the talent to steer the game into positions which are easier to play for him than the opponent), *Universality* (his versatility of style), and *Psychological* factors including his prodigious memory and emotional drive.

The only thing in this "Memorable Games" book that is missing from Fischer's original is the small personal tidbits that only the actual player of a game could know and sprinkle throughout annotations. For example, I remember Fischer describing the way one of his opponents (Sherwin) made a sly move by 'sliding the rook with his pinky.' That of course is missing here.

Soltis, a long-time journalist with the *New York Post*, is perhaps most popularly known for his monthly column *Chess to Enjoy* in *Chess Life* magazine. But he is also the most prolific chess book author around, and has written dozens of terrific chess books ranging from opening theory to esoteric musings on the game like *The Inner Game of Chess, The Wisest Things Ever Said About Chess* and *Rethinking the Chess Pieces.*

This may be his best.

Andy Soltis (right) playing Bobby Fischer blitz chess in New York, 1971

Fischer, Bobby
Ballard, D La Pierre
[B35]
Simul - Wichita KS, 04.04.1964

The discussion of Fischer books this month naturally leads to Okie memories of when Fischer came through this area in 1964.

In the spring of that year Bobby Fischer undertook a celebrated Simul tour of the USA. Strong players all over the heartland flocked to see the 21-year-old U.S. Champion whom everyone expected to challenge for the World Championship soon. Although he generally mowed down all comers in these exhibitions, a few did manage wins, including two Okies: Ross Carbonell, and D LP Ballard. This is Ballard's game with him, played in Wichita, KS, on April 4, 1964. Ballard went on to become Oklahoma's first official Master...

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 g6 5.Nc3 Bg7 6.Be3 Nf6 7.Bc4 [Fischer's favorite way to battle most variations of the Sicilian was with Bc4. His use of it against the Najdorf now goes by the name of the Fischer Variation. He also championed it against the Dragon and here the Accelerated Dragon.]

7...0-0 8.Bb3

It's well known that if white tries to play as in the Yugoslav Attack against the regular Dragon, with the moves Qd2, f3, and 0-0-0; he gets into trouble.

8...Ng4!? [At this time in the early 1960s this knight thrust was very new, having been played only in a few Soviet games.

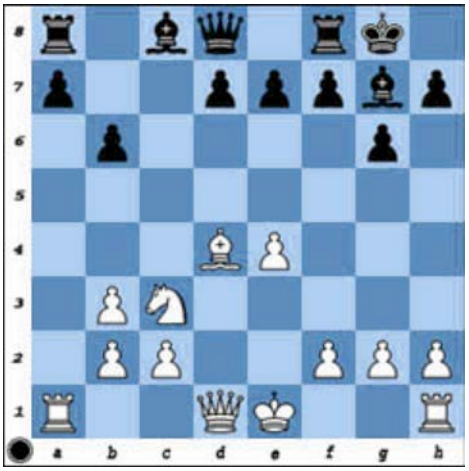
In particular, Ballard had just read an article about this line hot off the press in the January 1964 issue of *Shakmatny Bulletin* -- the authoritative chess publication in the Soviet Union at the time that was also read by serious chess students around the world (even those who didn't speak Russian).

Fischer had not seen this article yet. After the game Ballard showed the article to Fischer, and the photo here shows the two sitting together while Fischer reads it!

Now, how many players can say they out-prepared Bobby Fischer! It shows what an excellent student of the game Ballard was at this time.]

9.Qxg4 Nxd4 10.Qd1 Nxb3 [In the '70s for awhile the trendy move became 10...Ne6 intending ...b6 and ...Bb7. I played it myself at that time. But the capture of white's bishop is very natural.]

11.axb3 b6 12.Bd4



12... f6!?

TOP 25

For FEBRUARY 2020

Active Oklahoma Players

		This Month	Change	
1	Advait Patel	2537	0	
2	Howard Zhong	2307	0	
3	Tom Braunlich	2200	0	▲
4	Ryan Amburgy	2197	-11	▼
5	Mark Hulsey	2190	-12	▼
6	Anthony Paolercio	2080	0	
7	Veronika Zilajeva	2080	0	
8	Tom Patton	2077	0	
9	Charles D Unruh	2063	0	
10	James Long	2054	0	
11	Michael Nugent	2042	0	
12	Charles M Unruh	2024	0	
13	Matt Dalthorp	2015	0	
14	Chuck Johnson	2010	0	
15	Jeff Colbert	2008	0	
16	Stephen Gehly	2000	0	
17	Logan Zachare	1995	-3	
18	David Luscomb	1995	0	
19	Joe Dean Veal	1940	0	
20	Paul Hodgden	1935	0	
21	Wayne Hatcher	1926	0	
22	Maxwell Barnes	1919	60	▲
23	Harold Brown Jr.	1901	0	
24	Adley Bufford	1866	20	▲
25	Shaun Graham	1863	-39	▼

Player of the Month

IM JOHN DONALDSON

Anyone who achieves a *magnum opus* such as his new book reviewed on page one deserves special recognition! Congrats John.

What's this? Black prevents the loss of his important defensive bishop, but isn't it a big weakening? This apparently is the 'new move' from the Russian bulletin that Ballard sprang on his opponent, which Fischer didn't know about. It was played in a few Soviet master games in 1962.

13.h4

At first it seems white can refute Black's move with a small combination to fork the loose rook on a8: 13.Bxf6 Bxf6 14.Qd5+ e6 15.Qxa8 ... and in fact this happened in the first game played in this line in Kotkov-A.Zaitsev, 1962, which showed that it is not so simple for white: 15...Bxc3+ 16.bxc3 Qc7 Threatening both ...Qxc3+ and ...Ba6 trapping white's queen. The game went: 17.0-0 a5! 18.Ra4 d5 19.exd5 Bb7 20.Qa7 exd5 21.Re1 Ra8 22.Qxa8+ Bxa8 23.Re8+ Kg7 24.Rxa8 Qxc3 25.g3 Qxc2 26.Rf4 g5 27.Ra7+ Kg6 28.Rff7 Qxb3 29.Rxh7 a4 30.h4 gxh4 31.Rxh4 b5 32.Rf4 a3 33.Kg2 b4 34.Ra6+ Kg5 35.Ra8 Kg6 36.Ra6+ Kg5 37.Ra8 Qc4 38.Ra5 Kg6 39.Rxc4 dxc4 0-1 Kotkov,Y-Zaitsev,A Moscow 1962.

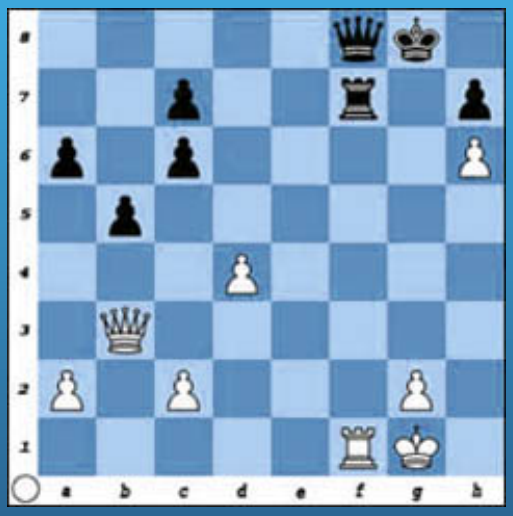
So it's interesting that Fischer, even though having to rush his moves in this Simul, sensed this trap and instead played another move -- and it's a logical move in the sense that Black just weakened the g6 pawn so white attacks it with the idea of h2-h4-h5.

Other games here seemed to show white gets a better game with 13. Qd3 and a quick 0-0-0.

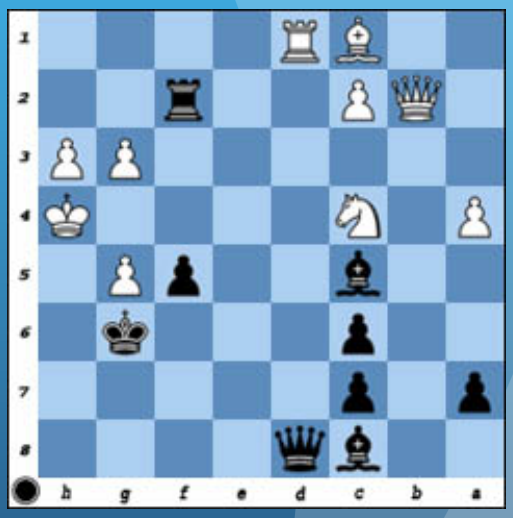
13...Bb7 14.h5 Kf7!?

PUZZLES

Answers Next Page



White to move and win. (Medium)



Black to move and win. (Difficult)

Ballard plays a creative move to strengthen his g6 pawn -- an understandable reaction with Bobby Fischer coming around to your board and about to open the h-file against you!

Instead, 14...d5 is more natural I guess, with a slight edge to white. Another master game played at the time saw black play: 14...Qc7 15.hxg6 hxg6 16.Qg4 Kf7 17.0-0-0 Bc6 18.Rhe1 Rh8 19.Kb1 Rh5 20.f4 Rah8 21.g3 Rh2 22.Bg1 R2h3 23.Bf2 Rh2 24.Bg1 R2h3 25.Nd5 Qb7 26.c4 R3h5 27.Bd4 b5 28.e5 f5 29.e6+ dxe6 30.Qe2 exd5 31.Qe6+ Kf8 32.Bc5 Bxb2 33.cxd5 Be8 34.Kxb2 Rh2+ 35.Kb1 R8h7 36.d6 Qg2 37.dxe7+ Kg7 38.Bd4+ Kh6 39.b4 Rxe7 40.Qb3 Bf7 41.Bg7+ Kh7 42.Qc3 Qa2+ 43.Kc1 Rc7 0-1 Nadezhdin - Listengarten, Riga 1962]

15.Qg4

[15.h6 is not a bad idea, burying the dark bishop. But naturally Fischer wants to keep the position open in these events.]

15...d5 16.exd5 Bxd5 17.0-0-0

[Fischer has played natural moves and has a significant edge, with more active pieces. But Ballard's setup is compact and fairly solid, although his bishop on g7 is not happy.]

17...Be6 18.Qg3

Fischer wants to keep pressure on black's g6 weakness, but apparently 18.Qe2 with pressure coming on the e-file instead, is strong.

18...Qb8 [A good move, fighting for the initiative since white doesn't want to trade queens.]

19.Qf3 Qc8

20.Ne4?

Answers to the Puzzles

(1) In the actual game white played 1. Qe6 but eventually only got a draw. He had a nice forced win with this series of ricochet-like queen checks: 1. Qg3+ Kh8 2. Qe5+ Kg8 3. Qg5+! Kh8 4. Rxf7 Qxf7 5. Qd8+ Qg8 6. Qf6+ and wins.

(2) Here black has a shocking queen-sac combination: 1. … Qxg5+!! 2. Bxg5, Rf4+ !! And now the rook must be captured, but whichever way white does it white will get a smothered mate with his bishop:

- 3. Bxf4 Be7+ and mate.
- 3. gxf4 Bf2mate.

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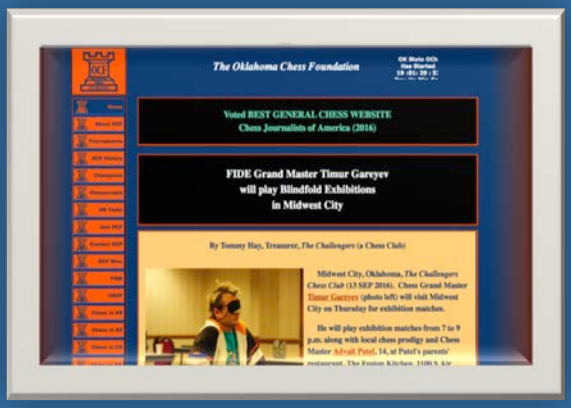
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FIDE Grand Master Timur Gareyev
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Fischer blunders the exchange, ruining an advantageous position. This sometimes happens in simuls, of course, where the grandmaster is spending just a few seconds per board as he moves around the playing hall; 20 strong moves in a row ruined by a blunder.

Most of Fischer's losses in the exhibition of 1964 were due to random blunders of this type in complex positions. In this case, even after losing the exchange Fischer was still in the game, but Ballard defended well and then pushed his advantage all the way...

[20.Qe2!]

20...Bg4 -+ 21.hxg6+ hxg6 22.Qd3 Bxd1 23.Rxd1 Qc6

[Black hastens to activate his pieces and finish development. He still has a bad bishop on g7, so the win isn't easy yet.]

24.Rh1 Rac8 25.c3 Rh8 26.Re1 Rhd8! 27.f4 Qd5

[Black threatens ...Qxd4. Ballard wants no part of the risky-looking 27...e5 28.fxe5 fxe5 29.Ng5+ Kg8 30.Qh3 although the computer likes white here. But Ballard's move is better anyway.]

Ballard (left) playing Fischer during this game.

(Both photos from DNLP Ballard's website, balcro.com.)

28.Kb1

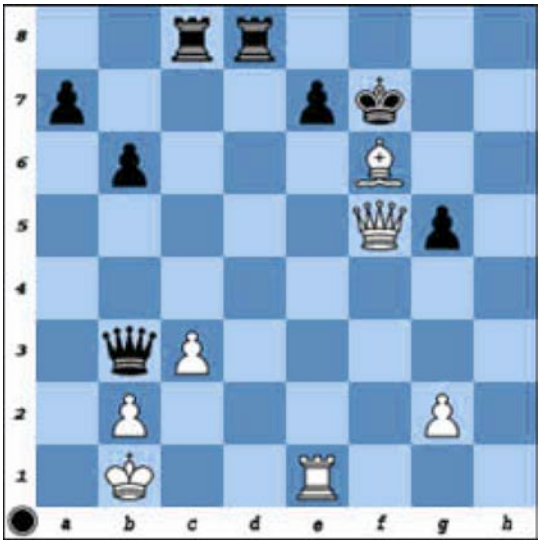
[28.Qc2 Qf5 and ...Bh6 is good for black.]

28...Qxb3 29.f5!?

[Fischer is desperate and goes for a dubious attack rather than trying to defend against a player I think he realized by now was too good to blunder this game away.]

29...gxf5 30.Ng5+ fxg5 31.Qxf5+ Bf6 32.Bxf6

[According to Frank Berry, "Fischer said after the game he should have played 32.Qh7+ and Ballard only nodded but knew that his king could escape safely to the queenside similar to 32...Ke8 33.Qg6+ Kd7 34.Bxf6 exf6 35.Qg7+ Kc6 36.Qxf6+ Kb7 37.Re7+ Ka6 38.Qf1+ Rc4 39.Kc1 Qa2 40.Qe2 Qa1+ 41.Kc2 Qa4+ 42.Kc1 Rh8 winning."]



32...Rd1+ 33.Rxd1 Qxd1+ 34.Ka2 Rc5!

[This rook lift ices the game, as Fischer's spite checks lead nowhere and soon ...Ra5+ will be decisive.]

0-1

For Chess is Life — both are the same;
Temptation pitfalls each.
We win a pawn — then lose the game;
A sermon without speech.

13th Annual New Year's Bash

Honorary Okie Luke Tran, of Wichita, won the Over-the-Board 13th edition of the New Year's Bash tournament in Olathe, KS (Kansas City) with a 4-0 score and raised his rating solidly into the Expert level.

Full crosstables here:

http://www.uschess.org/index.php/Player/Rating-Lookup-Old-format.html

The event was organized and directed by Brian Yang, assistant CJ Armenta.

HOW CHESS PLAYS OUT AT M.I.T.

Okie NM Howard Zhong has been dealing with the pandemic restrictions in school there, which includes its impact on the chess team. Here is an article in the M.I.T. NEWS on that subject, which includes quotes from Howard:

https://news.mit.edu/2021/how-chess-plays-out-at-mit-0122

MIT Chess Club, Howard at right. (h/t Cheng Zhong)

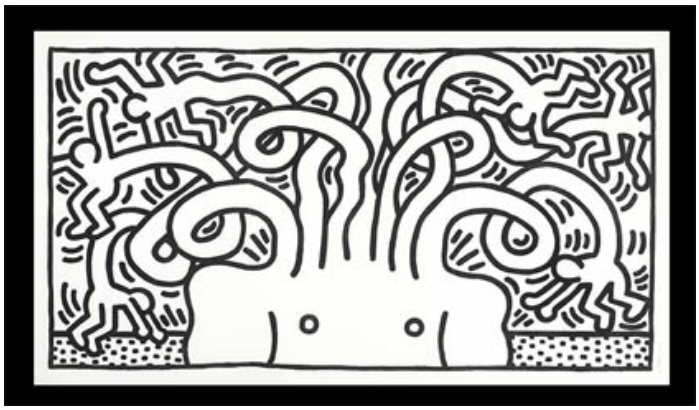
KEITH HARING — RADIANT GAMBIT

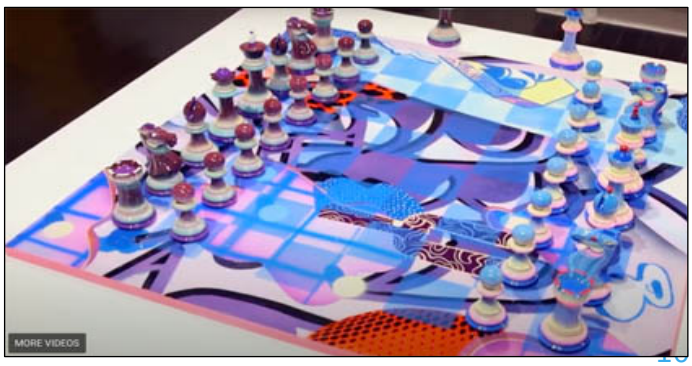
The fabulous World Chess Hall of Fame and Museum in St. Louis continues to roll out spectacular chess exhibitions despite the restrictions on travel from the pandemic.

Their latest exhibit is of the works of Keith Haring, a world-renowned "street artist" famous for his subway art in the 1980s. It includes "bespoke street art chess sets from Purling London and newly-commissioned pieces by Saint Louis artists, all paying homage to the late art icon." It is on view in person (by limited appointment) through May 16, 2021.

However, the "virtual tour" online is excellent by itself. See it here at this link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FjcIxXxBHNI&feature=emb_logo





Remembering John Taylor *(a.k.a. Duke Jonathan DeLaufyson Macebearer)*

— by Tony Essman

Veteran tournament player John Taylor passed away last month. Tony Essman provided some insights into the man and his interesting avocations related to chess.

I knew John Taylor since 1977. He was a member of the *Society for Creative Anachronism*, commonly called the SCA — an international organization devoted to research and re-creation of pre-17th-century skills: arts, combat, culture (including chess), and history through events and activities. It is organized into regions known as *Kingdoms*. Oklahoma and Texas are in the SCA Kingdom of Ansteorra, and John was heavily involved (and achieved a Master title).

Combat plays an important role in the SCA. It is usually conducted in the form of a tournament, and is patterned after the baton tournaments in medieval times. In medieval tournaments, the sword-like batons were made of wood, sometimes whalebone, and were used to prevent serious injury. In the SCA, rattan is used for the batons, as rattan does not splinter when broken, and is safer. There are generally no restrictions on gender, weight, or age, other being of majority age, for participants in SCA tournaments.

John was a master of this SCA baton combat. It is a full-force style of martial arts. Participants are required to wear armor, and the armor must adhere to a minimum standard to prevent serious injury. However, the bouts are physical, and deep bruising is common.

John won the Crown Tournament of Ansteorra *twice* — a very rare occurrence. He was awarded the title of "Duke of Ansteorra", which he retained for life. … I was at that tournament and witnessed his victory.

… Members in the SCA choose a persona name, the name they use when participating. John's SCA persona was "Duke Jonathan DeLaufyson Macebearer, MSCA."

For a knight in the SCA, prowess on the field is paramount. However, a knight is expected to have more than a passing acquaintance with chess, dance, juggling, and entertainment as a bard or singer.

John was a kind and generous human being.

Former Okie chess organizer at OU, Florian Helff, sends this info on a national chess event he is involved in organizing for corporate chess. Florian has been living in Seattle. for the last 4 years leading the Amazon Chess Club as well as part of the board of the Washington Chess Federation.

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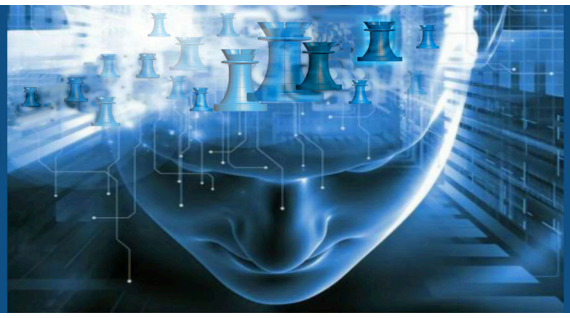
UPCOMING TOURNAMENTS



For More Tournament Info Visit the USCF Tournament Site:
www.uschess.org/tlas/upcoming.php

FEB 12-15 2021 DALLAS OPEN FORT WORTH TX

7-SS; G/90+30; DFW Airport Marriott South, 4151 Centreport Dr Fort Worth, TX 76155. 4-day and 3-day Options. **4-day**: Rds. Friday 2/12 7:00pm, Sat 2:30 pm, 7:10pm, Sun: 9:30 am - 2:15 pm, Mon: 9:30 am - 2:15 pm. 3-day Saturday 2/13 at 9:30 am then merge with 4-day. **Registration** should be done online at www.dallaschess.com **HR:** $85/85/85/85, 800-228-9290 reserve by 2/1 and identify yourself as part of the Dallas Chess Club staying at the DFW Airport Marriott South. Free Parking. COVID Restrictions in effect. Entries/questions: Dallas Chess Club, C/O Barbara Swafford, 2709 Longhorn Trail, Crowley, TX 76036. Info: Barb Swafford, 214-632-9000, info@dallaschess.com, www.dallaschess.com. Add $5 for CC phone entries; pre-reg. requires pre-payment. Note that the number of players is limited and will be registered on a first come first serve basis. *Register early*. NS. NC. W. FIDE. JGP.
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CoronaVirus Chess — Has it Gone TOO FAR?

By IM John Donaldson

Beating the Sicilian Main Lines

One of the hardest aspects of training for all chess players, particularly amateurs, is working on openings. The advent of strong engines has required pro players to analyze full-time to stay ahead of the crowd. Amateurs face other problems.

Those below 2400 FIDE must, to varying degrees depending on playing strength and experience, work on their overall game. This means sharpening tactics, improving positional skills and learning fundamental endgames. On top if that they need to know something about the opening if they are to avoid getting knocked out of the box early on. Add to these most amateur players have limited study time. What is one to do?

One idea, recommended by Slovak GM Jan Marcos in his excellent book *Under the Surface*, is to specialize in certain structures – that is to master certain systems where recurring pawn structures come up again and again. In the case of Marcos his suggestions are the King's Indian Attack for White and the Stonewall Dutch, with Movsesian and Gleizerov the respective models.

Those are but two examples. One could also base their opening choices around Isolated Queen Pawn positions or the Botvinnik English setup (c4, g3, Bg2 and e4). In these two instances one could actually apply the setups with both colors. Mastering typical middle game positions for these systems train two much needed skills - good opening and middle game play - and ensures emphasis is placed on understanding rather than memorizing.

German FIDE Master Jonas Hacker in his book *Beating the Sicilian Main Lines* (Everymanchess, www.everymanchess.com, 2020, figurine algebraic, 384 pages, $29.95) has come up with another system for White that meets the Sicilian and checks a lot of boxes. Chiefly it doesn't require learning a huge amount of theory (by Open Sicilian standards) and also packs some punch. He advocates employing the Maroczy Bind whenever possible.

The famous bind, where White establishes pawns on e4 and c4, is curiously named after the famous Hungarian Geza Maroczy. One says curiously because if you look in Mega Database 2021 and search for the Maroczy Bind (B34-B39) you will find only one game involving Maroczy – as Black (!) against Swiderski at Monte Carlo 1904. Maybe he played the Maroczy Bind with colors reversed or wrote an influential article on it, but I'm not aware this is the case.

Hacker proposes the Maroczy Bind structure against the Paulsen (1.e4 c4 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 a6 5.c4, Taimanov (1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nb5 d6 6.c4) and Accelerated Dragon (1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 g6 5.c4), and aims for it against the Dragon and Najdorf with the sequence 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.f3 aiming for 6.c4.

Of course, it's not possible to establish the Maroczy Bind against all Sicilian variations. Against the Scheveningen (1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 d6) Hacker likes the Keres Attack with 6.g4. After 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 e5 (Sveshnikov) he favors 6.Ndb5 d6 7.Nd5 and after 5…d6 (Classical) the Richter-Rauzer (6.Bg5).

Hacker is careful to make sure his proposed repertoire is internally consistent and can't be

move ordered into lines outside his recommendations. To this end he advocates 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 (or 2…Nc6) 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6 (Four Knights) 6.Nxc6 (6.Ndb5 d6 7.Bf4 would lead to a different Sveshnikov variation than the one he proposes). Against the tricky 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nb5 Nf6, the answer is not 6.N1c3 leading to a different line in the Four Knight's, but 6.Bf4!

Of course, there are limits as to how deep one can go in a 384-page book devoted to covering lines against all of Black's serious variations in the Sicilian. For example after 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.Nxc6 bxc6 7.e5 Nd5 8.Ne4 Qc7 9.f4 Qb6 10.c4 Bb4+ 11.Ke2 f5 12.exf6 Nxf6 13.Be3 Qd8 14.Nd6+ Bxd6 15.Qxd6 Bb7 16.Rd1 Rc8 17.Rg1 c5 18.g4 and now only 18…Qc7 is examined as played in Volokitin-Eljanov, Lutsk 2019, and not 18…Rc6! played as early as 2015.

This caveat aside, *Beating the Sicilian Main Lines* is a practical guide to building a manageable repertoire for White in the Open Sicilian. An excerpt for this book, which is available in both print and electronic formats, can be found at https://everymanchess.com/collections/new-paperback-books/products/opening-repertoire-beating-the-sicilian.

By IM John Donaldson

The Modernized Ruy Lopez: A Complete Repertoire for White:

(Thinkers Publishing, 2021, 514 pages, $40) by Darius Swiercz

This is one of the best opening books this reviewer has ever seen.

The Polish-American Grandmaster, currently rated in the top 100 in the world at classical, rapid and blitz chess, has the reputation as a top-rate theoretician and his first book does nothing to dispel this. This massive work covers the following lines of the Ruy Lopez, primarily concentrating on non 3…a6 lines:

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5

- 3…Nd4
- 3…Bc5
- 3…f5
- 3…Nge7
- 3…g6
- 3…Bc5
- 3…d6
- 3…Nf6 4.0-0 Nxe4 5.Re1 and 4.d3
- 3…a6 4.Ba4 b5 5.Bb3 Na5
- 3…a6 4.Ba4 g6
- 3…a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 d6
- 3…a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Nxe4 6.d4 Be7
- 3…a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Nxe4 6.d4 b5 7.Bb3 d5 8.Nxe5
- 3…a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Nxe4 6.d4 b5 7.Bb3 d5 8.dxe5 Be6 9.Nbd2

What comes through in this book is the author's objectivity. Some of the lesser lines are known to be better for White and Swiercz, who successfully played first board for the United States in the 2019 World Team Championship, provides practical solutions (for example 4.d3 instead of 4.Nc3 in the Schliemann). On the other hand the Berlin (3…Nf6) and the Open Ruy (3…a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Nxe4 6.d4 b5 7.Bb3 d5) have excellent reputations, and along with a few lines in the Sicilian (the Najdorf and Sveshnikov come immediately to mind) are among

Black's very best answers to 1.e4. Here one cannot speak of a clear path to a White advantage and Swiercz does not pretend to, but he does offer challenging lines with new ideas and analysis. He also offers two lines against both the Berlin and Open Ruy, letting the reader choose depending on their tournament situation.

A book like this undoubtedly has to have a lot of theory, and *The Modernized Ruy Lopez* does, but Swiercz does provide prose to guide the reader when needed. More importantly he provides the judgment of a world class grandmaster. Everyone can turn on their computer and check the computer evaluation but to actually understand the assessment is something altogether different and that is what you are getting with this book.

The Modernized Ruy Lopez is must reading for a wide number of chess players.

Everyone who plays the Ruy needs this book and those who defend it with non3…a6 systems and the Open variation would be well advised to buy a copy. Opening books (especially now) have always had a short shelf life, but I expect Swiercz's book to be the standard for some time.

Highly Recommended

Me who looked up my opponent's games and prepared 20 moves deep from the black side of a Sicilian Najdorf
1.b3 from my opponent